ANNUAL REPORT

OF

DELAWARE COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND

305 W. EIGHTH STREET

WILMINGTON, DELAWARE

FOR

FISCAL YEAR

JULY 1, 1954 TO JUNE 30, 1955

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FOREWORD

It is clear from this report that the Delaware Commission for the Blind is aware of its responsibility as a categorical agency serving the blind of Delaware. We are a categorical agency in that we are not merely responsible for one or two services to blind people, but insofar as organizationally feasible, for all services to blind people provided by the State government. We have, in the course of the reporting year, in addition to carrying forward our well established services, initiated one new service and given more than normal expansion to another.

The new phase of our work is the assumption by the Commission of the responsibility of furnishing to blind workers not feasible for placement in business or industry, opportunity to work in the Commission shop on sub-contracts from business and industry. Thus, workers who, for one reason or another, are unable to take their place in business or industry beside their seeing fellows, are provided with satisfying employment that enables them to become reasonably self-sustaining. This is not charity work but work that is an integral, if a minor, part of the business and industrial processes. It is therefore superior to the old craft type work traditionally done by blind people, now virtually obsolete by the intensification of the use of power machinery. We hope that this first year's experience will be but the beginning of a continuous program of dignified, reasonably lucrative employment for our workshop people.

The service that we have expanded more than normally is that relating to the prevention of blindness and the restoration or improvement of vision. We are firmly convinced, as are most workers in our field, that there is no entirely satisfactory solution to the problems of blindness except the elimination of that blindness. It is heartening then to note that through our efforts and those of cooperating ophthalmologists and agencies, more people are becoming conscious of the importance of eye care. Informational talks on this vital subject have been given throughout the State before service clubs and other civic groups; printed matter containing helpful hints on eye care has been distributed; and the radio and press have been used as media of education on eye care. Through this cooperative program some clients have been saved from serious loss of vision, and sight has been restored to others already blind.

Other areas of gratification are our vending stand program, moving ever forward and providing work opportunities for more and more blind men and women; our nursery school and kindergarten with its happy children being prepared to follow their predecessors into regular school classes in special schools for the blind or elsewhere, and our fine program of social service where our visitors and counselors have shown themselves eager to assist their clients in almost any activity of life where help is requested.

It is our hope that this report of activities will help to achieve one of our greatest aims, viz., to bring to the general public an appreciation of the capabilities of blind people, of their intrinsic worth as individuals, and an understanding of the fact that except for the accident of blindness, they in no way differ from their fellow human beings.

THE DELAWARE COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND

Members	Residence
Mrs. Jessie C. Wilson, *Chairman*	Dover
Mrs. Irenee duPont, *Honorary Chairman*	Granogue
J. Francis Blaine, *Secy. & Asst. Treas.*	Wilmington
Herbert B. Mearns, *Treasurer*	Wilmington
Emil R. Mayerberg, M.D.	Westover Hills
Mrs. Caleb M. Wright	Georgetown
Francis J. Cummings, Ph.D., *Exec. Secy.*	Carrcroft

OPHTHALMOLOGICAL CONSULTANTS

Dr. Davis G. Durham

Dr. William O. LaMotte, Jr.

Dr. Emil R. Mayerberg

COMMISSION MEETINGS

Regular Commission meetings are held monthly with the exception of the summer months of June, July, August and September. Special meetings are held whenever called. The annual meeting, during which officers are elected, is held in October. Meetings are held at the Commission headquarters unless otherwise specified.

PRINCIPAL OFFICE

305 W. Eighth Street, Wilmington, Delaware

F. J. Cummings, Ph.D., *Executive Secretary*

DEFINITION OF BLINDNESS

"Blind person" means one who is totally blind or has visual acuity of not more than 20/200 in the better eye with best correction or whose vision is limited in field so that the widest diameter subtends an angle no greater than 20 degrees.

MANDATORY REPORTING

The laws of the State of Delaware (Title 31, Section 2109) require that every health and social agency, attending or consulting physician, or nurse, shall report to the Delaware Commission for the Blind, in writing, the name, age and residence of persons who are blind within the definition of blindness as indicated above and in such cases shall furnish such additional information as the Commission requests for registration or prevention of blindness.



Blind man performing packaging operation in latex plant.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

The Delaware Commission for the Blind operates a Vocational Rehabilitation Program designed to provide counseling, physical restoration, training and placement of blind citizens of Delaware in accordance with their aptitudes, interests and abilities. Any services which enable blind persons to become employable or increase their employability are provided as part of the total vocational rehabilitation process.

During the past fiscal year the following goods and services were provided blind clients of Delaware under the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.



Young blind man successfully operates vending stand in fibre factory.

Clients	Service
24	Medical Examinations
25	Training and Training Materials
15	Maintenance and Transportation
8	Prosthetic Appliances
5	Surgery and Medical Treatment
3	Occupational Tools and Appliances

Eighteen blind clients were placed in employment during the past fiscal year as follows:

Clients	Type of Employment
7	Industrial
4	Business Enterprises (Vending Stands)
1	Rural Occupation
5	Workshop
1	Housewife

A review of the actual earnings of the above persons indicates that $21,000 was earned by this group, even though many of them were employed only for part of the year. In addition to the 18 persons placed in employment during the past fiscal year, the Commission provided follow-up supervision on persons previously placed by the Agency. A review of the earnings of persons previously placed for whom follow-up supervision was routinely provided revealed income of $75,000 during the past fiscal year. Therefore, the combined income of the employed group is in excess of $96,000.

It is important to note that most of these people would probably be unemployed were it not for the services of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program of the Delaware Commis-



Another vending stand operated by a young blind man in a local pipe fabricating plant.

sion for the Blind. The above information demonstrates the dollars and cents value of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program—the turning of potential aid receivers into active taxpayers. It does not, however, point up the social and psychological values derived by the clients, their families, and their home communities.

BUSINESS ENTERPRISES

In an effort to continue to provide to capable blind persons ever-expanding economic opportunities, the Delaware Commission for the Blind establishes and operates vending stands and snack bars in public and private buildings, factories and other suitable locations. These stands provide a valuable service to the public and to the employees of the companies in which they are located by serving hot and cold sandwiches, platters, hot and cold beverages, pastries, ice cream, etc. Thus management is relieved of the problems of providing lunch service for employees, and capable blind people are given opportunities to become self-supporting members of their community.

In March, 1955, the Delaware Commission for the Blind opened another new vending stand at the National Vulcanized Fibre Co., Newark, Del. The Commission also opened one of its part-time stands in the Legislative Hall, Dover, Del., to serve the legislators while they were in session. Negotiations are under way at present for several new locations, and one referral for a stand in Kennett Square, Pa. was turned over to the State Council for the Blind in Pennsylvania.

There are at present 15 full-time and 2 part-time stands in operation throughout Delaware, employing 14 full-time

blind operators, one part-time blind operator, and 2 blind trainees.

Total sales from all stands	$298,361.35
Salaries, bonuses, etc. paid to blind operators	44,369.35
Salaries, bonuses, etc. paid to sighted assistants	38,263.49
Average annual salary received by 14 full-time and 1 part-time blind operator	3,059.95
Average weekly salary received by 14 full-time and 1 part-time blind operator	58.84



Blind workers in sub-contract work stringing tags in Workshop.

WORKSHOP AND TRAINING CENTER

During the past fiscal year from 22 to 25 blind persons have been employed in subcontract work. Most of the contracts were those requiring manual dexterity such as tag stringing, envelope enclosures, collating, cloth swatching, and electric socket and cord assembly. The contracts were obtained from DuPont Direct Mail Service, Delaware Ledger Co., Wilmington Letter Service, and United Steel Barrel Co. These contracts enabled many of the blind of this area to work for wages and achieve an independence which had previously been denied them.

The traditional crafts of chair caning, rug weaving and rubber link mat assembly were carried on in the workshop as in previous years. However, this phase of our work has been greatly curtailed. Nine persons were employed in these processes but some of these persons were placed on subcontract work when it became our leading productive factor.

WORKSHOP CRAFT PRODUCTION

Chairs Caned and Reseated	681
Rugs Woven	274
Rubber Link Mats Assembled	31

EARNINGS OF WORKSHOP EMPLOYEES

Caning Labor	$2,696.19	
Weaving Labor	174.35	
Mats Labor	82.85	
Total Traditional Crafts		$2,953.39
Tag Stringing	$2,440.99	
Swatches and Cards (Assembly)	1,961.18	
Broadsides (Enclosures)	434.34	
Paint Chips (Assembly)	766.71	
Enclosures	266.04	
Collating	91.34	
Labeling	24.00	
Socket and Cord Assembly	101.23	
Total Sub-Contract Labor		6,085.83
TOTAL LABOR		$9,039.22

The training program for Vocational Rehabilitation clients included eleven trainees who received instruction in the traditional crafts performed in our shop as well as valuable instruction in sub-contract work and in the use of hand tools, the reading and writing of braille, travel training, and typing. Several of the clients who were trainees have taken their place in industry, service occupations and in the vending stand program.

FINANCIAL AID TO THE NEEDY BLIND

To be eligible for financial assistance under the Aid to the Blind program of the Delaware Commission for the Blind, a client must have no more than 20/200 visual acuity in the better eye with correctly fitted lenses or be suffering from a serious limitation in the visual field, and meet certain other statutory requirements of the Commission, such as age, residence, etc. Grants are made on a budgetary deficiency basis and statutory limitation restricts any single grant to a maximum amount of $85.00 monthly. Reciprocal agreements have been executed between Delaware and the states of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, waiving residence requirements when clients move from Delaware to one of the aforementioned states or vice versa.

Sixty-four applications for Aid to the Blind were received by the Commission during the past fiscal year as follows:

43	Approved
15	Rejected
1	Withdrawn
5	Pending

Forty cases were closed from the Aid to the Blind rolls of the Commission during the past fiscal year because of such factors as: Restoration of vision, improved vision, moved out of state, receiving support from children or OASI, allotments from servicemen, death, etc.

Expenditures for direct payments to receipients during the past year were as follows:

$ 72,215.03	State Funds
82,279.55	Federal Funds
$154,494.53	Total

Average number of recipients per month—210
Average payment per recipient per month—$61.31

HOME INSTRUCTION

The home instruction program of the Delaware Commission for the Blind includes the teaching of the reading and writing of braille, travel training, housekeeping training and the use of special appliances for better and more convenient living. Handcrafts, consisting of leatherwork, knitting, crocheting, etc., are taught. A total of 2636 home visits were made by workers of the Commission during the past year.

SOCIAL SERVICE

During the past year the Social Service Department has extended its search for suitable homes for the aged blind of Delaware. Our State has many good nursing homes and many of our aged blind clients who can no longer live alone for one reason or another have found love and care in these homes. Others among the aged blind do not need the care provided by a nursing home, but do prefer the systematic routine of an organized boarding home where other persons of their own age live. Several of our Delaware blind have been placed in such homes in nearby Pennsylvania, and are visited regularly by the Social Service staff of the Commission.



Blind lady enjoys novel recorded on talking book



Copying notes into braille from braille text

The total number of blind persons registered with our Agency for the past fiscal year was 675. During that period 34 Talking Book Machines were distributed to the homes of blind clients throughout the State, bringing the total out on loan to 108. Ten radios were distributed to needy blind persons, and white canes and household appliances adapted to the use of the blind were distributed to those who required them.

With the excellent cooperation of the Volunteer Bureau of the Welfare Council many needed services were provided blind people throughout the State, such as reading, chauffeuring, clerical assistance, etc.

STUDENT TRAINEE

For the past three years the Delaware Commission for the Blind has had a student trainee field program with students being assigned to the Commission from the Home Teacher Training Course of the Overbrook School for the Blind, Philadelpia. The Home Teacher Training Course includes four years of college work at the University of Pennsylvania, of which at least one semester is given over to field training. One student who trained with us is now employed in a nearby state as a social worker. The most recent trainee plans to attend the New York School of Social Work, having been granted a scholarship at that educational institution for further study. It is considered a privilege by these trainees to have the opportunity of doing their field work with the Commission here in Delaware.

OPHTHALMOLOGICAL SERVICES

Through the cooperation of the hospitals and doctors of the State of Delaware blind persons who cannot financially

provide for eye and health care are eligible for those services through the various eye and health clinics throughout the State. The Delaware Hospital in Wilmington, for instance, operates an eye clinic supervised and directed by Dr. W. O. LaMotte, Jr., and assisted by Dr. Davis G. Durham, Dr. William H. Kratka, and Dr. B. R. Vincent.

All surgery that can be done in Delaware is done here. If, however, it is considered necessary by our ophthalmological constultants the patient is sent to out of state hospitals where the type of surgery recommended can be given by experts in their field. If the client is financially unable to pay for surgery, it is provided without cost.

Excellent cooperation is received by the Commission from ophthalmologists in all parts of the State, and from service clubs, especially the Lions, interested in promoting the welfare of blind people.

PREVENTION OF BLINDNESS

The prevention of blindness program of the Delaware Commission for the Blind has been greatly expanded during the past fiscal year. Since the completion of our caseload screening by Dr. Davis G. Durham, the case workers of the Commission have continued "follow up" contacts to all clients for whom it was found desirable based upon the direc-



One of their quiet moments.

tion given by the ophthalmological consultants. Dr. W. O. LaMotte, Jr. and Dr. Davis G. Durham have been appointed ophthalmological consultants by the Delaware Commission for the Blind, joining our long-time consultant, Dr. Emil R. Mayerberg. Dr. Robert L. Dickey has given generously of his time and skill in treating the downstate area clients in need of medical or surgical eye care. Dr. J. Robert Fox has treated several clients in his area and other doctors also have contributed greatly to the progress of our Prevention of Blindness Program.

Several Lions Clubs throughout the State have indicated a willingness to assist financially in the cost of eye care for needy clients in their community. This cooperation has been most helpful in several instances when prolonged medical treatment was necessary or corrective glasses were needed.

During the past fiscal year three blind persons had their sight substantially restored so that they no longer meet the legal definition of blindness.



Playground scene at the Nursery School.

EDUCATION

NURSERY SCHOOL

Sunnybrook, with its attractive building and adequate playground area, has proved to be a very satisfactory training center for the children since it was leased from the Delaware Anti-Tuberculosis Society in 1950. Any blind child otherwise normal between the ages of three and six living in the northern New Castle County area is eligible to attend this day school which operates forty-eight weeks of the year. During the past



Look out below.

fiscal year nineteen boys and girls were given individual training and group experiences as they participated in the varied program provided at the Sunnybrook Nursery School for the preschool blind.

To blind children the value of nursery school training lies largely in the group experiences. Their needs, though not peculiar to them, tend to be more pressing than for seeing children. Thus Sunnybrook offers the children their earliest opportunity outside the home to learn to live with others of the same age, a place designed especially to allow them to be active and as creative as they wish. The play and activities are planned to meet the needs of these young children in their growth and development, supplementing the training and care which they receive in their homes.

During the past fiscal year:

19 boys and girls attended Sunnybrook regularly.

4 children completed their Sunnybrook experiences, entering other schools in the Fall of 1955.

42 preschool children were served by the Staff.

10 new referrals were made for services.

103 Home visits were made by Staff members.

10 meetings of parents and teachers were held.

Twenty-three helpful and cooperative volunteers worked a total of 730 hours, aiding the teachers in providing the right guidance, the right equipment and the right companionship for the 19 small Sunnybrookers. Through participation in the government's distribution of surplus food commodities to various state agencies, the food budget for Sunnybrook was relieved considerably.

PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND ADVANCED EDUCATION

The school-age blind children of Delaware are sent to well equipped and established schools for the Blind out of state for their education, the State paying the Institutions the per capita cost. This plan has been very satisfactory because of the small number of children involved.

During the past school year:

7 children attended the Maryland School for the Blind, Overlea, Md.

3 children were trained at the Royer-Greaves School for the Blind, Paoli, Penna.

1 child attended the Woods School, Langhorne, Penna.

The twelve visually-handicapped children who attended private and public schools within the State were given guidance by Commission staff members. A cooperative relationship was also established between the Commission and the respective school officials in aiding these boys and girls in their school adjustments.

RECREATION

During the past year the recreation committee of the Commission planned and carried out a varied program of activities for the blind clients of Delaware. Four boat rides on the Wilson Line making the trip from Wilmington to Philadelphia and return were enjoyed by some fifty blind persons. A box lunch was carried and eaten on the boat. From all comments the participants enjoyed the outing and the boat ride immensely.

On four occasions during the summer of 1954 picnics were planned, one for each of the four groups at Camp Landis. Good food, good fun and ample recreation were the order of the day during these outings.

The Wilmington entry in the Interstate Blind Bowler's League, of which the Commission is a co-sponsor with the Wilmington Lions Club, captured the League championship for the 1955 year, the first time in the history of a Wilmington team's participation that it has been proclaimed the champion of the League. The Wilmington team is the holder of a bowling trophy presented to the champion of the league to be held by that team for one year as tangible evidence of its championship. The trophy itself is on display in the reception room of the Commission.

The recreation committee planned and carried out the entertainment for the Christmas Party given each year by the Commission usually at the Y.M.C.A. in Wilmington, to which all the nearby blind who are able to attend are invited. Over 100 blind persons attended the party given this past December. The recreation committee built the program around the staff members of the Commission and the audience seemed to enjoy tremendously seeing the staff of the Commission performing for their benefit. The staff of the Commission was augmented by a very capable master of ceremonies, Mr. J. Francis Blaine, Secretary of the Commission.

CAMP LANDIS

This past year 61 blind guests from all parts of the State were entertained at Camp Landis, our summer vacation center for the blind. Guests were divided into four groups, each group remaining for a period of two weeks. Picnics and planned recreation were arranged by our Recreation Committee, and guests were entertained several days each week with music, games and refreshments provided by interested friends and civic minded groups, notably the Wilmington Lions Club. As usual, each guest was given free transportation to and from Camp and free meals and lodging for the two weeks at Camp. Through participation in the government's distribution of surplus food commodities to various state agencies, the food budget for Camp Landis was relieved considerably.

MISCELLANEOUS

The Commission serves as Delaware's clearing house for all matters pertaining to work for the blind. Blind people, their families or groups interested in the welfare of the blind may secure through the Commission information about the work for the blind anywhere. Also, the Commission acts as middleman in the securing for blind Delawareans of free radios, braille-transcription service, railroad and bus travel concessions, movie passes, special appliances for the blind including braille watches, braille cooking timers, etc., white canes and other devices calculated to reduce for the blind person the difficulty of living independently. A display of special appliances for the blind may be seen at the Commission headquarters.

REGISTRATION OF SOLICITORS

The Commission is given the responsibility of licensing agencies or individuals outside Delaware who wish to solicit funds in Delaware for the welfare of blind people. The following Agencies have been given permits:

Blind Artists Concerts, 34 S. 17th St., Phila., Pa.

American Foundation for the Blind, 15 West 16th Street, New York

American Foundation for Overseas Blind, 22 W. 17th St., New York.

Any other non-Delaware agency or individual soliciting funds in Delaware purportedly for the benefit of the blind is doing so in opposition to State law.

STATE USE BILL

Under the terms of Revised Code of Delaware, Title 31, Section 2115, state agencies are required to purchase goods and services from the Delaware Commission for the Blind, when such goods and services are equal in quality and price with those available through normal channels. An excellent working relationship has been established by the Commission with most State agencies.

FINANCIAL REPORT

STATE FUNDS

	Received	Expended
Salaries	$ 57,500.00	$ 57,500.00
Office Expense	1,530.00	1,530.00
Travel	4,230.00	4,230.00
Operations	18,000.00	18,000.00
Materials	9,000.00	9,000.00
Repairs and Replacements	5,400.00	5,400.00
Assistance Grants	65,000.00	65,000.00
Education	18,333.33	13,407.66
Encumbered Funds	116.67	116.67
Total	$179,110.00	$174,184.33

FEDERAL VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION FUNDS

Administration		$ 5,057.12
Vocational Guidance & Placement		16,735.22
Case Service		9,753.43
Total	$ 35,836.00	$ 31,545.77

FEDERAL AID TO THE BLIND FUNDS

Administration		$ 13,821.90
Assistance Grants		82,279.55
Total	$101,426.58	$ 96,101.45